

**RESPONSE TO RESTRICTION REQUIREMENT**

Serial No. 10/718,236

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Title: MINIMALLY INVASIVE VALVE REPAIR PROCEDURE AND APPARATUS

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Dkt.: P-21779.02

In the claims:

Please cancel claims 1-16 without prejudice.

1-16 (Canceled).

17. (Original) A clip assembly comprising:

two clips each having two end points which are separated from each other when said clips are in an open configuration and tending to return to a naturally closed configuration by reducing distance between said end points when the clip is in said open configuration;

two tissue penetrating needles each connected to one of said two end points of a corresponding one of said two clips through a flexible member; and

a flexible connector connecting the other end points of said two clips together.

18. (Original) The clip assembly of claim 17 further comprising releasing means for normally keeping said two clips in said open configuration and releasing each of said two clips to become separated from the associated flexible member to thereby allow said clips to begin returning to said closed configuration.

19. (Original) The clip assembly of claim 17 wherein said clips comprise a wire made of a shape memory material.

20. (Original) A minimally invasive method of holding two tissue parts together, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a clip assembly which comprises two clips each having two end points which are separated from each other when said clips are in an open configuration

and tending to return to a naturally closed configuration by reducing distance between said end points when the clip is in said open configuration, two tissue penetrating needles each connected to one of said two end points of a corresponding one of said two clips through a flexible member, and a flexible connector connecting the other end points of said two clips together;

penetrating and completely pulling one of the needles through a tissue part and penetrating and completely pulling the other of the needles through an adjacent tissue part while said clips are each in said open configuration;

pulling the needles until each of said clips is hooked to a corresponding one of the tissue parts; and

allowing said clips to start to return to said naturally closed configuration, whereby said two tissue parts are held together by said flexible connector stretched between said clips.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20 wherein said clip assembly further comprises releasing means for normally keeping said two clips in said open configuration and releasing each of said two clips to become separated from the associated flexible member to thereby allow said clips to begin returning to said closed configuration, and wherein said clips are allowed to start to return to said naturally closing configuration by separating said clips from said needles through said releasing means.

22. (Original) The method of claim 20 wherein said clips comprise a wire made of a shape memory material.